

been an unhappy summer for Lois, and if you shut her out of your sorrow"—

"I did not mean to be selfish," she replied, not seeing how much Gifford spoke for her own sake, "and I do not shut her out; but so long as she only sympathizes with me, and not with John too, I cannot let her talk to me about it."

"That is not quite just, Helen," he said; and afterward, Helen acknowledged this.

She put her hands into his, when he turned to go home; and searched his face with sad, eager eyes. "You are going to see him,—oh, Giff, you'll see John?" she said.

Lois saw them talking, as they came to the rectory door, with a dull feeling of envy. Gifford never seemed to care to talk much to her. What was that Miss Deborah had said of his once caring for Helen? She had the good sense to be ashamed of herself for remembering it, but a thought which comes even into an unwilling mind cannot be driven away without leaving its impress; the point of view is subtly and unconsciously changed. She was not altogether cordial to Gifford, when he said good-by to her, which he was quick to feel. "He thinks only of Helen," she said to herself. "I suppose he has forgotten anything he ever said to me, and my promise, too. I'm ready enough with promises," she thought, with a bitter little smile. But even this memory could not keep that happiness which Gifford had seen from shining in her eyes; and when she went up-stairs, Helen noticed it.

Perhaps because of Gifford's gentle reproof, she roused herself to say, as he had done, "You are very happy, Lois?"

"Oh, I am, I am!" she cried impulsively. "Oh, Helen, I have something to tell you." A very little sympathy in her cousin's voice brought her eager confidence to her lips. "Oh, Helen a letter has come!"

"John?" she hardly breathed. For one exquisite moment, which had yet its background that he had not been strong, Helen misunderstood her.

"No, it's only something about me," Lois answered humbly.

"Tell me," Helen said gently. "If anything makes you happy, you know I'll be glad."

Lois twisted her fingers together, with a nervous sort of